

ENGLISH  ACTION

Newsletter

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**CHANGING LEARNING
CHANGING LIVES**

The request for DfID to support an English programme came from the former Bangladesh Minister of Education, Osman Faruk, during a small Ifar event with the former British High Commissioner, the former Head of DfID and me in 2006! It has been an exciting journey since then, through all the discussions that went on, as to how we might do things differently and how ambitious we could be, in a country where English levels are so low and lack of English constrains both dialogue and opportunity.

It has been one of the most challenging and rewarding projects I have ever been associated with. Forgive me, but I have felt, from the beginning, rather possessive of English in Action, as if, in some way, it was my baby! Given the short time advisers normally serve in any one country, it is quite unusual to get a project approved and to still be around at implementation to celebrate the fruits of so much planning and creativity. Wanting to see EIA "grow up" was a major factor in my staying put for six years!

What I think will prove to be EIA's particular strength is not the innovative use of technology, which has been applauded all over the world, but the rigorous baseline information and research activities that are currently tracking the impact of all the different interventions. These will provide incontrovertible evidence of the difference that EIA will have made.

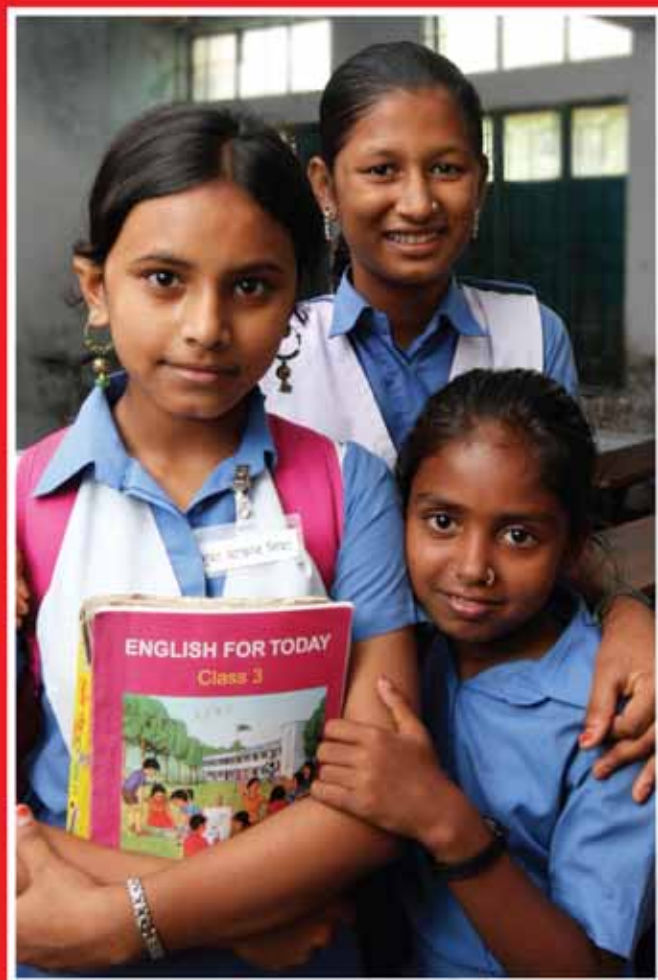
So can I say a big thank you to the entire EIA team, for making such a ground-breaking project happen in so many brilliant ways. DfID is truly proud of this project.

I leave Bangladesh now, confident that the project will mature wisely, as it goes to scale and from strength to strength. This baby is not mine; nor ever was; it belongs to every single person who has worked with such commitment and energy, to break down barriers, to make learning English enjoyable and to bring about successes which will in turn bring positive changes to people's lives and choices.

From time to time let me know how the youngster is doing, will you?

Barbara Payne
Senior Education Adviser
DFID Bangladesh

ENGLISH ACTION



Reflections on Extended Cluster Meetings (ECMs)

October 2010 was buzzing – full of activities. One of the important events was a series of Extended Cluster Meetings (ECM).

Scheduled half-way through the pilot phase, the main objective of the ECMs was to review and reflect on teachers' experiences of using EIA methods, materials and technologies inside the classrooms and assess what (of EIA methods, materials and integrated approaches) worked well during the trial phase so far and what to improve. The primary teachers also received new materials for grade 2, 4 and 5 in these meetings. 31 ECMs across both sectors – Primary and Secondary were conducted in the field in October and November 2010.

One of the major achievements identified and appreciated by the teachers was that EIA was able to break the barrier of shyness to speak English in the classrooms. This was true of both – the teachers and students. Teachers also realized and mentioned that they made significant progress in trialling out different techniques using EIA materials in the classrooms which they hardly did before. Mostly, teachers learned to demonstrate their skills in some CLT techniques, for example- organising pair and group work activities, active listening, choral dialogues, use of posters, use of audio etc in a more interactive way, however, some needed further support to improve their understanding and ability towards more practical applications of CLT in the context of Eft.



Primary Teachers were very excited to receive new materials for grade 2, 4 and 5. They were also happy to see their suggestions for improvement reflected in the new set of materials. Linking of EIA materials and English for Today (Eft) lessons has always been a

challenge for the teachers. The new materials are more user-friendly in this respect, as reported by the ECM participants

The Teachers' Facilitators' (TFs) involvement in organizing and conducting some sessions in the ECMs and their relationship with the teachers (as a mentor and critical friend) clearly indicated their increased level of confidence and skills in the newly assigned role.

The overall support mechanism of EIA especially the monthly cluster meetings and classroom support by the TFs were also highly appreciated during these meetings. The positive reflections we see in the field are not an end, just the beginning. We have 'miles to go'.

Reading scheme with Friends in Village Development Bangladesh (FIVDB)

English in Action (EIA), along with one of its consortium partners FIVDB, has recently taken the initiative of developing an English reading scheme for primary school children.

Language learners need opportunities to read, hear and understand the language as much as possible. This is particularly relevant for the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach. Reading schemes are widely used to address these needs and assist in the development of literacy skills amongst learners. Story books provide carefully structured reading materials which aim to scaffold learning through an enjoyable medium. In the context of EIA, the proposed English reading scheme will be treated as supplementary material, the main objective of which is to extend and/or accelerate language learning alongside the core textbook and EIA materials.

In addition to providing stimulation for the imagination, the reading materials will develop skills in the following areas: syntactic knowledge, lexis, phonics and semantics. The framework for the scheme will include local folklore and culturally relevant themes which are popular amongst learners. Graded according to levels of ability, the reading materials will introduce the readers to different genres, from simple stories in big books for shared reading in pre-school and Grade 1 classrooms to gradually introducing self-readers of various kinds including, fictional and non-fictional texts for Grade 3 children.

Initially, the materials will be piloted in 10 FIVDB and 10 Government schools. The outcome of the intervention will determine the nature of further input of these materials in other EIA schools.

Partnership with the National Content Repository- an A2I initiative

Access to Information (A2I) Programme, Prime Minister's Office, Bangladesh, has developed a National Content Repository called Jatiyo e-Tatthyakosh for providing easily accessible content on livelihood, health, education, agriculture, disaster management, law and human rights. Jatiyo e-Tatthyakosh will be used by people from all walks of life, even from the remote areas of the country, via Telecentres, including Union Information & Services Centers, in order to ensure access to information for all. The repository incorporates a simple search engine that helps render the content through key word(s), it holds content in different formats including, audio, video, animation, text and web links, and is available at <http://www.infokosh.bangladesh.gov.bd>

In order to upload content for the repository, A2I invited different organizations with relevant programmes. English in Action (EIA) was invited and has already registered with A2I as a content partner after participating in a one-day training programme held at the Prime Minister's Office on July 26, 2010.

This partnership has opened a new window for EIA and its target audience, especially primary and secondary teachers and their pupils, to have easy access to EIA materials which contribute to an effective teaching-learning process. The available EIA materials include audio and video material as well as electronic versions of the print materials developed by the EIA Materials Development Unit.

We believe that the partnership will help to reach a wider audience, providing more opportunity to access EIA materials and thus enabling the project to achieve its purpose: improving communicative English language skills of 25 million learners in order to ensure better access to the world economy.



Content partners for National Content Repository at Prime Minister's Office

EIA Quality Assurance (QA) process: identifying high standards

English in Action is into its second year of implementation and the ongoing Research Monitoring & Evaluation (RME) activities continue to maintain the momentum of the project through ME systems, alongside rigorous research and knowledge sharing. As the project moves forward towards the completion of its pilot phase (in April 2011) into an upscaling

phase it becomes even more critical for EIA to review, evaluate and learn from its key stakeholders 'what worked and what did not'.

RME is a major overarching component for EIA and specific systems have been under development to cater for the need of better understanding, based on factual learning and ways of incorporating this learning into a holistic implementation strategy.

Government teachers working in EIA implementation schools, teacher facilitators and students are some of

the main 'change drivers' in communities so a system that formalizes feedback from these groups through a FGD (Focus Group Discussion) process is potentially very informative. Such a system would greatly facilitate effective action by those directly involved in implementing the EIA programme.

An EIA Quality Assurance (QA) system has been initiated recently for the Teacher Training & Support program in which teachers, teacher facilitators and Teacher Development Coordinators (TDCs) were involved. This has been useful in identifying EIA success stories as well as the challenges or gaps at field implementation level – administrative and managerial. An EIA QA system was also developed for the material development (MD) process which involves the TDCs, RME team, and the MD team. The objective is to evaluate all the EIA materials (supplementary to the Government textbooks already available in the schools) which have been produced to date. A rigorous QA process will ensure high standards for the project as a whole and create a strong learning platform for EIA management.



LEARNING ENGLISH IN A CHANGING WORLD GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES & LOCAL CONTEXTS

English in Action is co-hosting the 5th BELTA International Conference to be held on May 20-22, 2011 at the BIAM Foundation Dhaka. The Conference aims to be a professional forum for teachers, trainers, policy makers, administrators, textbook or materials writers, researchers, educationalists related to English language, teaching, learning, testing and administration. Participants are expected to be ELT practitioners and policy makers from public or private sectors and other professionals in the field of language education and development. For more information please check www.eiabd.com and www.belta-bd.org.

BBC Janala receives Tech Award for educational innovation

BBC Janala has been awarded the prestigious Microsoft Education Award at this year's international Tech Awards in Silicon Valley, California.

The project, which is part of English in Action, beat over 1,000 nominations to become one of the final five laureates chosen for the award.

The Tech Awards celebrate the power of technology to address global challenges in the environment, economic development, education, equality and health.

BBC Janala impressed judges with its use of mobile technology to reach some of the poorest people in the country, offering a simple and affordable way to learn.

Stuart Gannes, from the Tech Awards jury and former Director of Stanford University's Digital Vision Program explains BBC Janala's achievement:



Sara Chamberlain and Yvonne Macpherson from BBC WST
at the Tech Award 2010

"For years people have been trying to work out how to bridge the digital divide and use PCs to teach people in the developing world. This was a challenge with a lack of available computers and connectivity to data networks. But while we were trying to duplicate our solution the world got connected via mobile phones. BBC Janala's genius is it uses the existing cellular network to provide people with educational content rather than waiting for what we have in the developed world."

Bringing changes to the classrooms

Traditional classrooms



EIA classrooms



Change: active, engaging, stimulating - our EIA classrooms



Change: practising language in context - English really means something now



Change: engaging all the senses to learn through visual and audio resources



Change: students in groups now actively sharing to learn

Findings from the field

The last EIA newsletter reported on some of the impacts of the programme on teachers' classroom practices, including more evidence of spoken English in the classroom and a substantial increase in student participation.

The same research also highlighted two other important areas of impact: improvement in teachers' English (communicative language skills in particular) and generating an enjoyable learning environment in English lessons.

Improvements in teachers' English

95% of primary teachers and 98% of secondary teachers (EIA research study 2a) say that EIA has helped to improve their own English language skill significantly. Teachers' confidence in English means that the students are likely to improve faster too. One secondary teacher explained: *"In the past I used Bangla as a medium of instruction but now I use English and get good responses from the students."*



It is anticipated that these improvements will help to develop further language skills through specifically targeted EIA materials for teachers in 2011.

Student enjoyment

Both primary and secondary students report that the kinds of activities promoted by EIA are the ones they enjoy most. A secondary student told researchers: *"Group work is my favourite. When madam does not only reading but also explains the meaning, asks questions, then I feel joyous. I love conversation in pair work."*



Communicative activities such as songs and games are not just fun but, as a secondary teacher explained, make the students more motivated to learn English too.

Active learning



The 490 EIA teachers whose lessons were observed as part of the research have been making big changes in their classrooms. It is apparent that both teachers and students are already benefitting from an 'active learning' approach to English.



Stories from the field

Peer support

One of the EIA Teachers' Training and Support activities is peer support between school partners and Teacher Facilitators (TFs) from the same upazila. EIA always encourages teachers to take part in pair work as well as to share and/or reflect on their classroom practice, challenges and success with their partners. But how effective is this practice? It was a question in my mind for a while and I got the answer at the recent Extended Cluster Meeting (ECM) held on 8-9 November 2010 at Lalmonirhat (Secondary). Here, we only had one TF, Mr. Abdur Rafi, for the last few months; the other TF, Mr. Rafiqul Islam, was already involved as a master trainer in another project. At the first Cluster Meeting (CM), Mr Islam expressed his apologies for not being able to continue both jobs at the same time. So we had no choice other than to run our programme with one TF.

Gradually I found that the existing TF, Mr. Rafi was becoming demotivated. While talking with him, he said *"I feel scattered, as I don't have any partner in my cluster. It's true that usually I can ask for support to you over phone or in the Cluster Meeting. But having a partner is much more helpful to discuss about the modules, about classes and about everything regarding EIA"*.

Meanwhile, Mr. Rafiqul Islam was getting updates about EIA from the different schools in Lalmonirhat involved in the programme from time to time and he was so inspired by the EIA activities that, after four months, once again he applied to join EIA. When I asked him the reason for his interest, he said the CLT techniques suggested by EIA, seemed very scientific to him. I particularly liked one of his comments, which is really inspiring for EIA, *"I don't know whether I'll be a good TF or not, but by being involved with EIA, then in the long run I'll certainly be a good teacher and that is my actual target"*.

According to him, besides various CLT techniques practised in the classroom, one of the attractive



features of EIA is its partnership approach to working with peers, which made him courageous enough to rejoin after five months, when the other participants were already far ahead of him. At the last ECM Mr. Islam conducted a session with confidence and when I complimented him on what was his first work he again mentioned the partnership approach of EIA. Rafiqul said that he and the other TF, Rafi, always share their new ideas and challenges over the phone or by meeting up. Our already continuing TF, Mr. Rafi expressed the same opinion regarding his partner adding, *"Now working with EIA seems to me more trouble-free and enjoyable, as I can share any problem instantly with my partner"*.

Though competition between peers is also observed, I should call it a healthy competition which is leading to constructive learning. I came back from Lalmonirhat this time with a feeling of relief and contentment.

Mostan Zida Al Noor

Teacher Development Coordinator
English in Action

Happy parents

I write my story about one of my students and her grandmother. In the beginning when I communicated with my students, it was a change in my teaching life. Before EIA, I generally used to speak in Bangla in my English class. My students also used Bangla to communicate with each other. After using EIA materials and a CLT approach in my class most

students now use English to communicate with each other.

One day, one of my students named Sumon, went home and said to his grandmother, *"Good afternoon, how are you today?"* His grandmother asked Sumon's mother to explain what he had just said as she didn't understand anything. She also asked Sumon's mother whether Sumon was OK or whether he had gone mad! Then Sumon also greeted his mother in the same way as he greeted his grandmother.

The next day, Sumon's mother came to the school to see me. I greeted her by saying *"Good morning lady. How are you? Do you have any problem?"* Hearing my words, she became really very angry. She went to the head teacher and complained about me. She said that I am a mad man and I am turning her son mad just like me. She also said that she doesn't understand anything that I said to her. Then my head teacher and I identified the problem. I told her in Bangla that *"Now I am an EIA teacher. In our class we use English. So, our students try to speak in English inside the class, outside the class, even in their home with their family. We inspire them to talk to English more and more. Because without knowing English nobody can prosper in life in this modern age."* Then the lady was very pleased. Other parents also encourage us to speak more English in our class. Now the parents also encourage their children to learn English and talk in English even in the home.

Md. Salim

Assistant Teacher,
Hamchadi S. K. Govt. Primary School
EIA TF, Laxmipur

Practice makes perfect

After having EIA training for several days I became able to speak in English in my classroom. My students became astonished hearing my fluent English. One of my students named Tuhin, asked me in Bangla *"How can you speak English so fluently, sir?"* I replied in English *"It's easy to speak in English if you practise it more and more."* He again asked me in Bangla *"What is*

the way of practising?" I advised him to use the words that he knows in his practical life. He did so. Next day, he told me that people called him 'officious' because he was using English without a reason. I again advised him *"Don't lag behind, one day you will get people's support."* He followed my advice. After a few days, some people wanted to know why he was speaking English. He explained the reason to them. Understanding the importance of English, people started to send their children to him. Tuhin became the English teacher of the children of the community.

Md. Abdul Motaleb

Sadar, Laxmipur.

English class is the only class

It happened just a few days ago. I joined EIA and started to practice EIA suggested techniques in the classroom. Before that, I always used to worry about a few students in the English class. Because they were afraid of English and so tried to remain inactive in the class. I tried but could not find any way to make them active. EIA solved my problems to a great extent. I started to follow EIA methods and begun to use EIA materials. Now to my great surprise, I observed that the slow and reluctant learners became more active. They began to speak in English even outside my class. They started practising the spoken language every now and then. At first, other subject teachers started complaining to me about those students because they used to play language games like word building, guessing etc. in other classes as well. The consequence is even more exciting! What happened next is the other subject teachers also became interested and started to use English as much as possible. At one point, the teachers and students made a remark: *"There is no other class than English in our school. Even our Science teacher teaches in English."*

Mr. Mozammel Hoque

Teacher, Rangamati Govt. High School

A day in Rangamati

Passing the paddy field, through the woods on the muddy walkway, we headed for Becharam Karbaripara Registered Non-Govt. Primary School (RNGPS). Becharam Karbaripara RNGPS is one of the remotest schools which EIA supports in the Rangamati Cluster. Hardly anyone goes there for a visit. For Clare Woodward (from the Open University UK) and myself it was the first time that we had visited schools in Rangamati. We were excited, thrilled and curious.



While walking, suddenly, we heard a motorbike coming. One of the RNGPS teachers was going to the school on his motorbike. A little later another teacher and the head teacher joined us on the way.



After walking for an hour we had to cross a lake by boat to reach the school. Where were the boatmen? I wondered!

Students come to study in this school from far away. So do the teachers. Every day they travel about two hours by bike, on foot and by boat to reach the school. In the monsoon season they even have to walk through hills as the flat road through the jungle gets flooded.



At the school, the students take responsibility for keeping the premises clean and beautiful. Not only that, as there is no drinking water available in the hills, students take turns to bring drinking water from the nearby village.



This was the first time the students had ever seen a foreigner! They were surprised and shocked – but in a positive way.

It was great to see the children in the classrooms—singing, rhyming, doing pair work and above all, having a lot of fun.



English is a third language for Rangamati children. So learning English becomes difficult for them sometimes but I was totally impressed by the eagerness they showed to learn English, the efforts teachers made to teach English and with the overall classroom environment.

The time came to say good-bye. Two students from grade 5 took us on the other side of the lake.

It was an amazing day. The level of motivation and the commitment of the teachers and students, despite all the odds, is so commendable and will remain something I can learn from.



Mourie Nishad
Head of Teacher Training
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